

Governor's Office records bill clears final legislative hurdle



Advocate Photo by MARK BALLARD -- With six days left in the legislative session, the Louisiana Senate met in an unusual Saturday session. House Rep. John Bel Edwards, D-Amite, visited the chamber, shaking hands with senators.

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The Louisiana Senate gave final passage Saturday morning to legislation that would ensure transparency of records in the Governor's Office, at least for the next governor.

Without "no" a vote, the Senate agreed to [a House change](#) that set the date the new public records regime would go into effect at noon Jan. 11, 2016, meaning it would apply as the next governor takes office.

[Senate Bill 190](#) now heads to Gov. Bobby Jindal, who would have to sign it for the measure to become law. If Jindal vetoes, the Legislature would have to override.

When asked about the governor's intentions, Jindal's spokesman, Mike Reed, said in

an email: “We are reviewing the bill.”

The legislation, sponsored by Baton Rouge Republican Sen. Dan Claitor, [rolls back a 2009 change championed by Jindal](#) that introduced the notion of shielding from public access records that are part of a governor’s “deliberative process.”

Some legislators and [media organizations](#), as well as the [Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana](#), say the “deliberative process” provision has been abused to hide documents.

SB190 would keep the governor’s communications with his internal staff exempt from disclosure. But no longer would agencies outside the governor’s office be able to shield records claiming they are part of the governor’s “deliberative process.”

The legislation would also remove an exemption that gives executive branch agencies a six-month blackout period on budget documents. In addition, the governor’s travel records would be accessible within seven days.

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